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Supplement of evaluation of doctoral dissertation
Between the Living, the Dead and the Gods: Writing as a Tool for Communication with the
Underworld in Some Ancient Civilizations
written by
Łukasz Maciej Byrski

Doctoral dissertation written by Łukasz Maciej Byrski entitled *Between the Living, the Dead and the Gods: Writing as a Tool for Communication with the Underworld in Some Ancient Civilizations* was originally made under supervision of prof. Kazimiery Mikoś in 2023.

The new revised version of PhD is consisted of two parts. The first part is written on 309 pages, and the second part is appendix (illustrative material) written on 102 pages.

Candidate made considerable changes in the new version, which consists various elements which were missing in the first version.

The first part Introduction (pp. 9-11) candidate formulated his hypothesis in which he wants “to demonstrate the universality of attempts to establish contacts with the afterlife in ancient civilizations” and to prove “that in the cultures where the written exists, it has been used for contacts with the afterlife”. He also added the methods (12-13) according to he will evaluate this hypothesis and research topics. In this new version he added hypothesis and methods which were missing in the first version of this PhD.

The second part of the dissertation is devoted to the analysis thirty letters to the dead which have been found in various places in Egypt (Part I – Egypt). Most of them have been previously published and now they are kept in various museums in the world. Introduction chapter of part 2 in consisted of three parts: the description of what are the letters of the dead (pp. 14-16), the way they supposedly work in the Ancient Egypt as author describe it as “communication with the Otherworlds” (pp. 17-22), and the last part in which he addresses the

previously, very rare, study of such letters (pp. 23-24). This last subchapter also includes one table which includes 27 letters with 12 authors who previously mentioned or published them. One, last letter, papyrus from the British Museum is the only one which was not previously published in this table. In this part he made some smaller changes which were needed, and now this chapter represents good presentation of his study of the Ancient Egyptian letters to the dead.

The biggest part of the next section (2.2) is compilation of the “letters of the dead”. Methodologically it is consisted of several parts: 1) title, 2) background context, 3) translation, and 4) commentary. Each of the previously mentioned 30 letters are written according to the same methodology which is good. Authors approach is very consistent, and I think that he did excellent job in this part of the thesis (pp. 26-189).

The next, Part II - China, is consisted of the Chinese letters to the Underworld. In the introduction of this part of the thesis author wrote about the magical power of writing in ancient Chinese beliefs (pp. 190-193), and then about the communication with the Otherworld in Chinese sources (pp. 194-195). The last part, which is written in the same methodology as Egyptian letters, author gave the history of the previous research of this topic (pp. 196-197) which includes the table (p. 198) with 13 letters of the dead which were discovered between 1973 and 2016 (pp. 199-228). Sadly, this table still does not include details of the museum or private collections in which these letters are kept. This is very important information for any scholar who would eventually want to continue his research in the future.

The next Part III – Greco-Roman World and Northern Europe (pp. 229-257) is written completely differently than in previous version of this PhD. The previous version was consisted of only several pages, and the new version consists of the good analysis of the topic in Greco-Roman world (pp. 229-256), and the previously written short overview of the topic among Celts and Nordic people (pp. 256-257). This part of the thesis was, in my opinion, the biggest problem of the first version of the thesis because it was not written according to the methods of previous parts. Now, in this new version, candidate made significant changes and he explained the meaning of writing and its magical power in Greco-Roman beliefs (pp. 229-232), and ways of the communication with Underworld in Greek and Roman sources (pp. 233-237). In the continuation the study candidate evaluates various sources (*Tabulae Defixiones*, pp. 238-242, and letters and messages to the dead spirits (pp. 242-256). Now, in this part, candidate well demonstrates his methods of research and wrote everything that was missing in the previous version.

The last part of the thesis is conclusion (pp. 258-264). In the new version of the conclusion candidate tried to answer the eight relevant questions (pp. 258-263) of this thesis. he also prepared three general models of communication with the Underworld in the above researched ancient civilizations (pp. 263-264).

Bibliography (pp. 265-298), appendix (pp. 299-308) and list of tables (p. 309) are included in the end of the dissertation. In bibliography (pp. 265-298) author made some needed changes and it is now written according to the same methodology. He also added one new table in appendix (pp. 305-308).

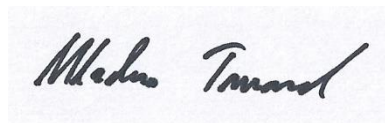
The second volume of this thesis consists of illustrative material (Appendix) (pp. 1-116).

After the whole new evaluation of the thesis, I think that candidate wrote excellent dissertation about the communication between the living and the dead in various ancient civilizations. His research is now complete, and it includes the same methodology in research of the topic in four different cultures (Egyptian, Chinese, Greek and Roman). Now it includes the very important elements which were missing in the first version, like hypothesis and well written conclusion.

Taking into account the above analysis and argumentation, I hereby state that the submitted doctoral dissertation meets the conditions specified in Article 13.1 of the Act of 14 March 2003 on scientific degrees and academic title and degrees and titles in the arts (Journal of Laws of 2017, item 1789, as amended)), i.e. the doctoral dissertation provides an original solution to a scientific problem and demonstrates the candidate's general theoretical knowledge in the discipline of Culture and Religion Studies and the ability to conduct scientific work independently and I apply for admitting mgr. Łukasz Maciej Byrski to further stages of the doctoral procedure.

In addition, I request that the dissertation be distinguished with honours.

Zagreb, July 5, 2024.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mladen Tomar", is written on a light blue rectangular background.